

National Hepatitis Testing Day

May 19, 2012, will be the first National Viral Hepatitis Testing Day. This initiative is part of the U.S. Health and Human Services viral hepatitis strategic plan and is another step toward identifying the millions of Americans who have chronic hepatitis B and C but are not aware of their infection.

Viral hepatitis (A, B, and C) causes life-threatening liver diseases around the world. An estimated 4.4 million people in the United States have chronic hepatitis. Chronic hepatitis B and C cause liver disease, liver cancer, cirrhosis, liver failure and death.

Expanding testing for hepatitis B is especially important among Asian and Pacific Islanders (APIs) because nearly one in 10 APIs in the United States are chronically infected with hepatitis B, and one-third or more are unaware of their infection. Hepatitis B is more common in people who live in or were born in regions, including the Far East, Southeast Asia, Hawaii, Guam, Samoa, Marshall Island and other Pacific islands. People from these areas are more often infected at birth or in early childhood and develop a lifelong, chronic infection.

If you, your parents, or your children, were born in any of these places, talk to your medical provider about getting tested for hepatitis B.

In the U.S., more people are now dying from hepatitis C than from HIV. This increase is attributable to the aging of baby boomers (born between 1945 and 1965) who are infected with hepatitis C. An estimated 134,000 people are chronically infected with hepatitis C in Los Angeles County alone.

You should be tested for hepatitis C if any of the following apply to you: had a blood transfusion or organ transplant prior to July 1992; ever injected drugs; have HIV; been exposed to blood on the job (such as through an accidental needle stick); and/or have a nonprofessional tattoo or piercing.

To find a hepatitis testing site near you, please visit www.hivla.org.
At the Search by Service box, select Hepatitis, then click “Go!”

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